



South Dakota Department of the Military South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs



ZIMMERMAN AND POLLARD ATTEND NASDVA

Last week SDDVA Secretary Larry Zimmerman and Deputy Secretary Pollard attended the National Association for State Directors of Veterans Affairs Conference in Florida.

Deputy Secretary Pollard served as one of the speakers for a "Best Practices" segment and provided an overview of Operation RAV. Other "Best Practices" presentations included: Branding, Music Memory, Veterans Homelessness, and a program by Wisconsin entitled "Move It."

Other topics covered during the conference included, DOD data in support of outreach, hire veterans programs, Hyperbaric treatment, VA policy and planning initiatives, National

Cemetery, Veterans Benefit Administration, My VA strategic partners, My VA update and overview, and the future of the VA and the VHA.



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VA DEPUTY SECRETARY GIBSON BRIEFS STATE DIRECTORS

Last week during the National Association for State Directors of Veterans Affairs Conference in Florida, VA Deputy Secretary Gibson centered his comments on both positive and the negative issues that the VA is facing today.

Gibson noted that veteran's demand for care and benefits still exceeds the VA's capacity to meet that demand, and as a result veterans wait too long. He said, "We need to streamline the six different channels for Care-in-the-Community that have evolved over the last 20 years into a single programs that veterans, private-sector providers, and the VA staff can understand. In IT we have to manage our way through technical debt accumulated over decades so we can build the technology platform needed for the state-of-the-art care and service."

Gibson stated that the VA still struggles with insufficient funding and little financial flexibility to meet the needs of veterans. "We'll spend a billion dollars this year curing veterans of Hepatitis C using drugs that weren't even approved by the FDA when we submitted our FY15 budget to Congress."

Gibson stated that the VA has to change their culture where, too often, frontline staff are reluctant to offer suggestions to improve day-to-day operations and where many staff define success as following the rules rather than meeting the needs of the veterans served.

STATE VETERANS CEMETERY GETTING A MUCH NEEDED FACELIFT



Superintendent Brad Richardson, Plant Manager Tom Inman and Director of Operations Randall Meyers stand in front of the new fencing that is being installed at the Veterans Cemetery at the Michael J. Fitzmaurice Veterans Home.

Cement is being poured today with the remainder of fence being installed this week and next.

SENATOR ROUNDS THANKS VSOS AND SDDVA

In my first eight months working as a member of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, I'm beginning to learn just how complicated it can be for our veterans to work with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to obtain promised benefits and utilize the agency's wide range of services. While trying to navigate the VA and its benefits, there are a number of resources veterans can tap into for help. Veterans Service Officers, who are employed by counties and tribes in South Dakota, are but one group of individuals committed to providing information, assistance, counseling and referrals to veterans to help them navigate the VA and address a wide array of issues unique to our veterans.

Veterans Service Officers, or VSOs, often play a necessary and crucial role in improving the lives of South Dakota veterans and their families. These VSOs are trained by the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs (SDDVA) to provide assistance to veterans, dependents and survivors. Their expertise and dedication to VA issues has improved the lives of countless South Dakota veterans throughout the years.

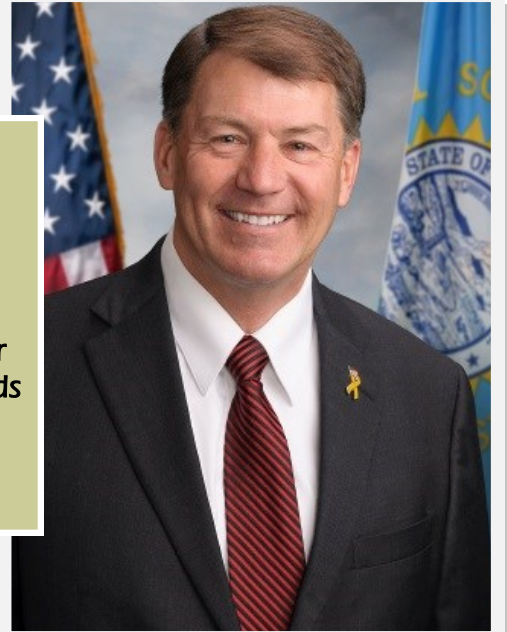
I recently had an opportunity to meet with a group of VSOs and staff from the SDDVA at a gathering in Pierre. Many VSOs share my frustrations with the problems plaguing the VA that are preventing our veterans from receiving the timely, quality care they have been promised. Yet every day, our VSOs work tirelessly to push through the VA red tape and make certain that South Dakota veterans receive the care they deserve.

In recent years, the Department of Veterans Affairs has rightly earned a reputation of poor service and poor use of taxpayer dollars. While there are many great physicians and nurses at the VA caring for our veterans, I have heard too many firsthand accounts of mismanagement during committee hearings and through the many calls to my office from South Dakotans struggling to work with VA bureaucrats. Given the many challenges with the VA, advocating for our veterans at the local level is more important than ever.

Our veterans and their families make incredible sacrifices to defend our country and keep us safe. County and tribal VSOs and the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs have a direct and positive impact in making certain they are properly cared for when their mission is complete. I'm very proud of the work our VSOs do to assist and guide our nation's heroes. For more information about VSOs or to find your local officer for assistance, you can call the SDDVA at (605) 773-3269 or visit www.vetaffairs.sd.gov.

I will continue my work on the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee to hold the VA fully accountable to these selfless and brave men and women across the country. Nevertheless, I remain grateful to organizations and individuals – especially South Dakota Veterans Service Officers – who work quietly and tirelessly every day on behalf of our veterans.

Thanking
our VSOs
By Senator
Mike Rounds





ROBERT "BORB" BORBELY MEMORIAL RIDE OR GOLF FUNDRAISER

Sunday , September 20, 2015

10:00 am - 12:30 am (Brunch \$11.00—kids \$8.00)

A portion of the brunch will be donated to the fundraiser

Proceeds will benefit the education of Borbely's children and

Rider Deanna Elmquist to help with her cancer expenses as per Borb's wish

Belle Fourche Country Club

10941 HWY 34, Belle Fourche—605-892-3472

**50/50
DRAWING**

**RIDE: KICKSTANDS UP 1:00 PM
FROM BELLE FOURCHE, TO ALZADA, HULETT, SUNDANCE**



**GOLF: 1:00 PM
2-MAN SCRAMBLE 18 HOLES:
\$50.00
SIGN-UP AT THE CLUB HOUSE
OR CALL 605-892-3472**



SPONSORED BY THE BLACK HILLS CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN LEGION RIDERS POST 164 & THE BELLE FOURCHE COUNTRY CLUB



VETERANS TOWN HALL

Mitchell Fairgrounds

September 16 - 5:00 PM

*with Veterans, Family Members, Veterans Service
Organizations, Community Partners*

*Hosted by:
Darwin Goodspeed, Director
Sioux Falls VA Health Care System &
James Brubaker,
Director, VA Regional Office*

For VA leadership to listen and learn from attendees and to answer questions about VA health care and benefits provided by the Sioux Falls VA Health Care System & Dakotas Regional Office. A benefits fair precedes the town hall from 3:00 to 5:00 PM. Staff will also be available after the town hall for questions.

(Thank you to Jessica Davidson, Davison County VSO for her assistance.)



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

WITH LABOR AND HONOR VFW POST 628 PROVIDES CASKETS AND URNS FOR THEIR HEROES

When a veteran or a spouse of a veteran in South Dakota dies, and the family can't afford a casket or an urn, John M. Bliss Post 628 of the Veterans of Foreign Wars in Sioux Falls provides one. Free.

"It's what we do," said Post Commander Malcolm "Butch" Haugen. "It's a labor of honor and respect for our fellow veterans in need. We are their family; we take care of veterans of any war and of any branch of service, whether members of the VFW or not. To my knowledge, no other State provides this program to aid needy veterans in less fortunate financial circumstances."

To be eligible for a free casket or urn, all a veteran or spouse needs is evidence of honorable service, be a resident of South Dakota, and be interred in South Dakota.

The program, Veterans Honored Internment, a not-for-profit corporation, was founded in 1999 by Paul Redfield, a resident of the South Dakota Veterans Home in Hot Springs. In 2006, Post 628 joined the program. Since 1999, the program has donated 284 caskets and 123 urns to veterans and their spouses.

Post Quartermaster Richard Schwanke, in charge of construction, said Post 628 has 180 caskets prearranged, which is why 7-10 caskets and six urns, and Hot Springs has 25 caskets and 34 urns, all ready for use in South Dakota.

A special room of Post 628 meeting hall houses all the wood, and pallbearer handles, stains, padded lining, tools, and construction and storage area needed. Once a week, four or five volunteers gather in the casket room and, in one day, cut the wood to size and assemble the casket with screws. The next three or four days are used for applying stain and three coats of polyurethane, and installing six paler handles, some painted gold and some dark grey. A completed casket weighs about 130 pounds.

The wood for both caskets and urns is 3/4-inch grade A-2 red oak veneer plywood stained with one of three coats of color; medium dark early American, lighter golden pecan and red oak.

After the casket is completed and dry, the top is left open for viewing and padded white lining with a red, white, and blue streamer in each corner, all sewn by wives of veterans, is installed. Attached to the front of the casket is a brass plaque with the slogan "Made for Veterans by Veterans".

The caskets are acceptable at all South Dakota cemeteries, including Black Hills National Cemetery.

The only cost to the VFW for caskets and urns is materials, \$350 for a casket, \$125 for an urn, and for a wood emblem of service on the casket or urn or for a wall hanging, \$50 for large and \$25 for small. Schwanke said donations in any amount are accepted.

Ten Sioux Falls veterans volunteer for construction: Jim Anderson, Steve Chaffins, Kenneth Haugen, Doug Haugstad, Rod Helman, Lowell McFarland, Bob VanNoort, Don Norton, and Rich Schwanke.



GOVERNOR PROCLAIMS POW MIA RECOGNITION

At the request of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs, Gov. Dennis Daugaard has proclaimed Sept. 13-19, 2015, as "POW/MIA Recognition Week," calling on all South Dakotans to honor those men and women who fought bravely for our freedoms.

"While we are grateful to all of those who have served our nation, this week is designated to remember and recognize the sacrifices endured by those members of the Armed Forces of the United States who were held as prisoners of war or remain missing in action," the Governor said. "The state of South Dakota continues to support efforts to account for every service member classified as Missing in Action."

Larry Zimmerman, Secretary of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs, encourages all South Dakotans to set aside time during Sept. 13-19, to honor the POW/MIAs who fought to protect our freedoms and lost theirs, as well as remember those engaged in today's struggle to guard our way of life for future generations.

"In their service to our country, former prisoners of war and those missing in action, have sacrificed mightily to maintain the promise of liberty that we hold dear," said Zimmerman. "POW/MIA week affords all of us a great opportunity to reaffirm our vow to never forget the courage of our nation's staunchest defenders – our former POWs and MIA's. We owe them and their families our gratitude."

MASKE ASSISTS VETERANS IN GETTING HIS MEDALS RETURNED

SDDVA Field Officer Mike Maske and CVSO Susan Irons assist veteran in getting his medals back. In total there were three shadow boxes of medals and ribbons.

Verne Hendrick (100 years old), served in the U.S. Army from 1941–1948 and received numerous citations and medals including two purple hearts and two bronze stars. Near the end of WWII he had the opportunity to meet President Harry S. Truman and General of the Army Dwight D. Eisenhower.

Verne's former caregiver, Marsha Stamp was on hand when the medals were returned.



VETERANS HONOR MARCH

The South Dakota National Guard's Enlisted Association will host its 12th annual Black Hills Veterans Honor March and Marathon on Saturday, Sept. 19, in the northern Black Hills.

The march pays tribute to the many sacrifices made by this nation's veterans. Many participants also march in honor of fallen service members.

The 26.2-mile march is open to all military service members and the civilian public. Participants can compete as individuals or in five-member teams and can complete the course by walking, running or marching. There is also a 16.2-mile mini-march available for participants.

Marchers will start on the Mickelson Trail at approximately 8 a.m. (MDT) at the Rochford Trailhead and finish at the Deadwood Fairgrounds. The first half of this march will be uphill to Dumont, then, downhill to the finish line. The march can take between six and eight hours to complete.

Interested participants and volunteers can register for the event by going to the website: www.blackhillsveteranmarch.com or by contacting Sgt. 1st Class Benjamin Lamp at (605) 357-2939.

VETERANS NETWORK HAS LARGE PRESENCE AT SD STATE FAIR

SDDVA' Erin Bultje delivered message to veterans at the South Dakota State Fair last Thursday, a day designated as "Veterans Day at the State Fair." In her remarks Bultje shared success stories from Operations RAV and Ketchup and outlined the goals for OK II. She thanked veterans and their families for their service to this great country and read a Veterans Day proclamation from Governor Daugaard.

Representatives from the Veterans Service Organizations, County Veterans Service Officers and SDDVA staff manned booths during the Fair and were available to respond to veterans questions.

SDDVA staff assisting in the booth were Erin Bultje, John Fette, Kevin Swanson, Kevin Bowen and William Huffmon. CVSOs that assisted in the booth were Ron and Nancy Falor, Douglas Huntrods, Scott Malimanek, Mike Lueck and Mike McDonald.



SYMPOSIUM CONNECTS SERVICE PROVIDERS WITH MILITARY RESOURCES

The South Dakota Coalition for Military Families hosted a symposium to help Black Hills area service providers learn more about military benefits available for service members, veterans and their families, Sept. 9, at the Holiday Inn Convention Center in Spearfish.

The SDCMF's goal is for every South Dakota military family to be connected to the right program, resource, service or benefit at the right time.

"Too often, our service members encounter challenges with finances, employment, education, mental or physical health and they do not know where to go or who to reach out to," said Lt. Col. Bryan Jacobson, SDNG family program director.

"Within the past three years, the coalition has brought people together to see how they can work together and better serve," said Neal Lutke from the Pennington County Veterans Services Office. "We look at the Coalition for Military Families as a great opportunity to do some networking and to find out about other resources that we can refer veterans or their families' to," said Lutke.

Opening remarks for the symposium were made by Lt. Gov. Matt Michels, Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, South Dakota National Guard adjutant general and retired Command Sgt. Maj. Larry Zimmerman, secretary of the South Dakota Department of Veteran's Affairs.

"We have so many resources in this world," said Lt. Gov. Matt Michels, a Navy veteran. "We just need to access them. The coalition has the capability to connect individuals with the help they need whether they are service men or women dealing with direct or extended family issues."

Informational booths were set up for the attendees to learn more about the benefits a military family is eligible to use such as Hero 2 Hired, Vet Center, South Dakota Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, SDNG's Service Member and Family Support branch and the Mobile Vet Center.

"Our goal is to develop a network of professional organizations and providers across South Dakota that ensures the right resources are available for our service members and their families, no matter when or where they might need them," said Jacobson.

One of the many resources available to help reach people wherever they are is the Mobile Vet Center, which provides counseling for post-traumatic stress disorder, sexual trauma, marriage and family issues and suicide prevention.

"When a Vet Center is miles from your home, it's a long drive to access its many services," said Jeff Gorr, veteran outreach program specialist. "When those services come to you on wheels, life gets a little more convenient."



SDNG AND SURINAME SHARE DISASTER RESPONSE BEST PRACTICES

Three members of the South Dakota National Guard spent two days in Suriname, the state's South American partner nation, Aug. 26-27, as part of a series of recent subject matter expert exchanges focusing on disaster response best practices.

The Guardsmen met with leadership from Suriname's Army, Navy, Air Force, Military Police, Special Troops and the National Coordination Center for Disaster Relief to discuss joint operations during disaster response.

"This exchange brought together the various branches of Suriname's Defense Forces and allowed us to discuss practices that would allow them to best work together to achieve a common goal," said Sgt. Maj. Chad Schmitz, operations NCO, SDNG.

"Their leadership is striving to get the coordination between their National Coordination Center for Disaster Relief and their defense forces in an emergency situation or natural disaster to work together much like South Dakota's Office of Emergency Management and National Guard when responding to disasters," said Sgt. 1st Class Chad Brooks, Joint Operations Center NCO, SDNG.

Over the course of two days, S.D. Guardsmen presented briefs ranging in topics from command and control principles to the common operating procedure, all focused on joint operations, in which various branches of the military and civilian assets would need to work together.

"We shared some of South Dakota's best practices, how we run our Joint Operations Center and how we manage the communication and coordination necessary when conducting operations," said Capt. Jodi Gilberti, operations officer, SDNG.

Following the briefs, leadership from the various branches of Suriname's military and the NCCDR were presented with a natural disaster exercise in which people and assets would need to be moved requiring all of the organizations to coordinate in order to accomplish the mission.

"We gave them an exercise with a few scenarios such as roads washing away causing the need for Navy boats and Air Force planes to move Army personnel to various locations," said Schmitz. "It really opened up a line of communication among leadership and started their planning process."

"We hope that this exchange helped reinforce some of the practices they've seen throughout South Dakota," Gilberti said. "We also hope it builds on the relationships between their joint military staff and civilian organizations."



Upcoming Events

Sept. 10—VABHHCS Welcome Home—Main Street Square—Rapid City—6:00 pm—9:00 pm (MT)
Sept. 11 — Veterans Stand Down—Wagner—National Guard Armory—9:00 am—1:00 pm (CT)
Sept. 11—VABHHCS VSO Congressional Forum—Rapid City—10:00 am
Sept. 12—Vietnam Veterans of America State Council Meeting—Pierre Post 8 American Legion—Noon (CT)
Sept. 12—PVA 1st Annual Poker Run—Sioux Empire Fairgrounds—1:00 pm (CT)
Sept. 15—Eagle Butte Stand Down—Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe Veterans Building 10:00 am—1:30
Sept. 15-16—VABHHCS Mental Summits—Rapid City/Hot Springs Campus
Sept. 16—SD Veterans Council—DAV Headquarters—Sioux Falls—10:00 am (CT)
Sept. 16—Veterans Town Hall Meeting—Fairgrounds—Mitchell—5:00 pm (CT)
Sept. 17—Veterans Appreciation Day—Watertown
Sept. 18—POW-MIA Ceremony—Sioux Falls Veterans Memorial Park—6:30 pm (CT)
Sept. 18—Ellsworth AFB Retiree Appreciation Day— Exhibits 9:00 am—3:00 pm (MDT)—Luncheon 11:00 am—1:00 pm (MDT) - EAFB
Sept. 19—Agent Orange Town Hall Forum—VFW Post 1273 (420 Main Street) - Rapid City—Two Sessions (one from 9:00 am—noon and one from noon—3:00 pm (MDT))
Sept. 25—Veterans Stand Down—VFW—Sioux Falls (3601 S. Minnesota Ave.) - 9:00 am—2:00 pm (CT)
Sept. 25-27—NCPVA Veterans Trapshoot—Crooks
Oct. 5—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am (MT)
Oct. 9—Women Veterans Conference
Oct. 10—DAV Fall Conference—DAV Headquarters—Sioux Falls
Oct. 24—VVA Agent Orange Town Hall Meeting—1519 W. 51st St—Sioux Falls—9:00 am—3:00 pm (CT)
Nov. 7—Vietnam Veterans of America State Council Meeting—Pierre Post 8 American Legion—Noon (CT)
Nov. 13—VABHHCS VSO Congressional Forum—Hot Springs—10:00 am
Dec. 8— Governor's Budget Address—Pierre

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Jan. 4—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am (MT)
Jan. 12—SD Legislative Session Opens—Pierre
Jan. 14—Veterans Legislative Breakfast—Pierre
Jan. 27-28—State Tribal Relations Days—Pierre
Apr. 4—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am (MT)
April 15-17—DAV Convention—Rapid City
Jul. 11—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am (MT)
Oct. 3—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am (MT)

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